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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 006424

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS TU I2

SUBJECT: CODEL MCCONNEL'S OCTOBER 10 MEETINGS WITH PM  
ERDOGAN AND TGS COS GEN OZKOK

REF: A) ANKARA 6238 AND PREVIOUS

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman. Reasons: 1.5 (B and D).

(U) Baghdad minimize considered.

¶1. (C) Summary: PM Erdogan told visiting Codel McConnel October 10 that elements within Turkey and Iraq were making "ugly" statements about the possible deployment of Turkish troops to Iraq as part of the stabilization force there. Erdogan said he was not familiar with the details of the discussions on a location for a Turkish deployment, but believed that Salahaddin region would be Turkey's first choice. The MFA and TGS will make a recommendation and the GOT will make the final decision. In a separate meeting, TGS Chief GEN Ozkok said a Turkish contribution was intended to help create the conditions under which others could carry out humanitarian and development assistance. Turkey's own experience in building a republic might enable Turkey to assist in the nation-building process in Iraq. Erdogan said that Syria under President al-Assad was moving towards democratization and argued that Turkey and Syria had overcome their past differences. Erdogan said Turkey would like to open its border with Armenia, but Armenia must first recognize the existing borders. Ozkok professed no objection to improved Turkey-Armenia relations if Yerevan abandoned its position on "genocide." Ozkok appealed for help in facilitating technology transfer from the US to Turkey, and in project approvals in the defense industry area. End summary.

¶2. (U) Senator McConnell, accompanied by Senators Burns, Craig, Thomas and Chafee, met with Prime Minister Erdogan and Chief of the Turkish General Staff GEN Ozkok (separately) October 10. Ambassador and other members of the country team accompanied the Codel to both meetings.

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Terrorism and Iraq  
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¶3. (U) Erdogan said that elements within Iraq and Turkey were making "ugly" statements about the deployment of Turkish troops to Iraq. KDP leader Barzani's representative in Ankara recently made statements that disturbed Turkey. &How can someone who represents a tribe, not even a state, make such statements without drawing any reaction from the U.S.?8 Erdogan said the US must help build public support for deployment. Erdogan professed that he was not familiar with the details of the discussions on the possible location of Turkish troops in Iraq, but believed the Salahaddin region would be Turkey's first choice, with Al Anbar as a possible alternative. The MFA and TGS would make a recommendation and then the GOT will make a final decision.

¶4. (C) In response to a question, Erdogan said he did not know if Al-Qaeda was active in the region. But PKK/KADEK remains active in northern Iraq. Erdogan called on the U.S. to take action against the PKK/KADEK: &It's not enough to put an organization on a terrorism list.8

¶5. (C) After extolling the importance of congressional visits to TGS, GEN Ozkok noted that in the face of new threats and challenges, US and Turkey were "indispensable partners." The US and Turkey agreed on the need to eliminate terrorism from Iraq. Ozkok explained Turkey's 18-year struggle against the PKK/KADEK and how the organization now had about 3,000 members in camps in northern Iraq. Ozkok argued PKK/Kadek was now preparing to launch attacks on Turkey. He said one should not discriminate between terrorist organizations and PKK/KADEK, and argued the organization should be eliminated and dismantled. He recalled that the USG and GOT were already engaged in discussions on how to do this.

16. (C) Ozkok noted that Turkey and the US have a long history of cooperation in working together militarily. With respect to Iraq, Turkey had granted every US request save one: the transit of US ground forces through Turkey prior to the commencement of military operations against Iraq last March. He noted that this was the Parliament's to decide: "we all must respect that decision." Ozkok said the recent parliamentary authorization permitting a troop contribution to the stabilization force had as its top objective assistance to the Iraqi people, to give them hope and prosperity. The contribution would also be a way to assist the US. Details on place, timing, and ROE were yet to be worked out. Senator McConnell expressed appreciation for the GOT's and Parliament's decision to help stabilize Iraq, a sentiment seconded by the other senators. He also praised the Turkish armed forces' cooperation with the US.

17. (C) Senator Thomas asked Ozkok to elaborate on the mission that Turkish troops would perform in Iraq. Ozkok said that the military would be there not to resolve all of Iraq's problems, but to create the conditions for other organizations to properly function. Stability would permit other government agencies to work on infrastructure improvements and other assistance projects. Senator Chafee asked how the situation and mission in Iraq might differ from that in Kosovo and Bosnia. Ozkok replied that the Balkans conflicts were internal conflicts between indigenous populations whereas the situation in Iraq was brought about by outside intervention. This has led to a different kind of situation in Iraq; a situation which US forces have handled well, he said. He noted that Iraq also had ethnic and religious differences, but the divisions were not as great as in the Balkans. He also commented that one reason to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity was that an Iraq without Kurds would be dominated by the Shia who were susceptible to Iranian influence.

18. (C) Ozkok asked the Senators what they saw as Iraq's end state. Senator Chafee replied "democracy is the goal." Ozkok said that Turkey knew from its own experience that one cannot learn democracy overnight. Iraqis will face difficult choices, such as whether to have a parliamentary or presidential system of government. Turkey's own experience might be of some help.

19. (C) Senator McConnell expressed the hope that arrangements for the deployment of Turkish forces to Iraq could be achieved in a way so as to not cause problems. Ozkok acknowledged that there had been statements by individual Iraqi leaders opposing the Turkish deployment. A request for a troop contribution from the temporary government in Iraq might address the public's misunderstanding caused by the negative statements. Senator McConnell noted that the deployment should be seen as an opportunity to improve relations. He recalled seeing soldiers from the 101st in Mosul doing a lot of civilian projects and working directly with the local people. If Turkey did this, it could be a major contribution to future Turkey-Iraq relations. Ozkok agreed, saying that Turkish forces had experience in this regard from its participation in peacekeeping in the Balkans and Afghanistan. If Iraqis approach the Turks in an unbiased way, they will soon understand that Turkey wants to contribute positively to their prosperity and stability.

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Armenia  
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110. (C) Erdogan said he would like to open the border with Armenia, but Armenia must first recognize the border. &How can we have normal relations with a country that does not recognize our borders?& In response to a question from Senator McConnell about the prospects for improved relations between Turkey and Armenia, Ozkok professed a desire for better relations, noting that the issue was in the hands of the GOT (i.e. civilians). He went on to say that if Armenia dropped the genocide issue, there would be no obstacle to better relations. After being reminded by TGS Deputy J3 MG Kalyoncu, Ozkok noted that because the concept of genocide is embedded in the Armenian constitution, it would not be easy for Yerevan to alter its policy.

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Syria  
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111. (C) Erdogan argued that President al-Assad was &more

Western and peaceful8 than his father, and therefore represents an opportunity for change. He claimed that Syria is moving toward democratization, and that Turkey and Syria have overcome past differences.

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Civilian-Military Relations in Turkey  
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¶12. (C) Senator McConnell asked Ozkok what changes might be necessary for Turkey to join the EU, noting that military-government relations in Turkey were different than other places in Europe. Ozkok acknowledged that the relationship was different in Turkey, but he believed the differences were not great. He noted that the Cabinet appoints the TGS Chief without the military putting forward a candidate. Although the government usually selects the most senior Army officer, on two occasions civilian leaders have chosen someone else. Some changes had already been made regarding the composition and function of the National Security Council. While the military had made suggestions to soften the impact of these reforms ("changing attitudes and biases takes time," he said), TGS had not opposed them.

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Help in Bilateral Defense Industrial Relationship  
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¶13. (C) Ozkok told the delegation that the TGS attaches high importance to its defense industrial relationship with the US. He lamented that sometimes Turkey encountered some difficulties in getting what it needed. Particularly, technology transfer and congressional approval for defense equipment transactions were "sometimes difficult." He solicited the senators' assistance to facilitate approvals, which he saw as important to improve US-Turkish relations.

¶14. (U) Codel McConnell did not clear this message before it departed post.  
EDELMAN